

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL HONG KOOG

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 0236

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR CH UR US

SUBJECT: SOVIET DIPLOMAT'S COMMENTS ON APPOINTMENT OF HUA KUO-FENG
AS PRC ACTING PREMIER

1. SUMMARY: A SOVIET DIPLOMAT IN PEKING, PRESUMABLY REFLECTING CURRENT SOVIET EMBASSY SPECULATION ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE ELEVATION OF HUA KUO-FENG TO BE PRC ACTING PREMIER, TOLD US ON FEBRUARY 10 HE DID NOT THINK THAT TENG HSIAO-PING SUFFERED A MAJOR DEFEAT AS A RESULT OF HIS FAILURE TO BE NAMED PREMIER. THE DIPLOMAT (FIRST SECRETARY KOLESKOV) SAID FLATLY THAT TENG RETAINED HIS FORMER TITLES AND PROBABLY MUCH OF HIS POWER BASE. AT THE SAME TIME, HE DESCRIBED HUA'S APPOINTMENT AS A "POSITIVE" DEVELOPMENT IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS AND IMPLIED THE SOVIETS FELT RELIEF THAT THEIR OLD OPPONENT TENG HAD AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT FAILED TO CONSOLIDATE HIS POWER BY BECOMING PREMIER. END SUMMARY.

2. KOLESNIKOV SAID THE SOVIETS HAD BEEN COMPLETELY SURPRISED BY HUA KUO-FENG'S APPOINTMENT AND FIRST LEARNED OF IT FROM THE
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FEBRUARY 7 NCNA REPORT. HE ASSUMED THAT A POLITBURO OR

CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING HAD TAKEN PLACE BUT SAID HE HAD NO DEFINITE INFORMATION THAT IT HAD OR WHEN THE DECISION TO ELEVATE HUA HAD BEEN MADE. ACCORDING TO KOLESNIKOV, THE SOVIETS BELIEVE THERE IS CONSIDERABLE TENSION BETWEEN "MODERATES" AND "RADICALS" IN THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP AT THE PRESENT TIME AS EVIDENCED BY THE EDUCATION CAMPAIGN-- AND THE ELEVATION OF TENG HSIAO-PING AT THIS TIME WOULD HAVE EXACERBATED THE TENSION. TENG MAY HAVE SEEN THIS HIMSELF AND WITHDRAWN HIS CANDIDACY FOR THE TIME BEING--OR BEEN TOLD TO DO THIS BY MAO TSE-TUNG--IN ORDER TO AVOID JEOPARDIZING "STABILITY AND UNITY" AND THE EFFORTS FOR CONSTRUCTION AND PRODUCTION. THE CHINESE LEADERSHIP THEN TURNED TO THE LESS CONTROVERSIAL HUA KUO-FENG WHO AS A PRAGMATIST AND GOOD ADMINISTRATOR WAS WELL SUITED FOR THE TASK OF BUILDING CHINA.

3. KOLESNIKOV CONTINUED THAT THE SOVIET EMBASSY THUS CONSIDERS HUA'S APPOINTMENT TO HAVE BEEN THE RESULT OF A COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE MODERATES AND THE RADICALS, WITH THE BALANCE QUITE HEAVILY IN FAVOR OF THE MODERATES. HE SAID HE THOUGHT IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT HUA'S APPOINTMENT MAY PROVE TEMPORARY AND TENG COULD YET BE NAMED PREMIER BUT THAT IT WAS MORE LIKELY THAT HUA WOULD BE CONFIRMED AS PREMIER AND TENG WOULD ASSUME THE NUMBER TWO SPOT IN THE PARTY WHILE RETAINING HIS GOVERNMENT TITLES.

4. AT THE SAME TIME, ACCORDING TO KOLESNIKOV, THE SOVIETS CONSIDER HUA'S APPOINTMENT TO BE A "POSITIVE" DEVELOPMENT FOR SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS. THEY HAD REVIEWED THEIR FILES ON HUA AND WERE STRUCK BY THE ABSENCE OF "HEARTFELT VINDICTIVENESS" IN HIS STATEMENTS AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION. KOLESNIKOV COMPARED HUA'S RELATIVELY MILD SPEECH IN TIBET LAST YEAR WITH THE STRONG SPEECH BY CHEN HSI-LIEN IN SINKIANG IN OCTOBER AS A CASE IN POINT. WHILE CAUTIONING THAT IT WAS STILL TOO EARLY TO TELL, HE SUGGESTED THAT HUA'S APPOINTMENT MAY PRESAGE AN EASING OF THE ANTI-SOVIET TIRADES IN CHINESE MEDIA. THEY HAVE NOTED SOME IMPROVEMENT IN THE LAST FEW DAYS BUT DOES NOT KNOW IF THIS IS INDICATIVE OF A LONG-RANGE TREND. OTHER THAN A POSSIBLE IMPROVEMENT IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS, THE SOVIETS APPARENTLY DO NOT EXPECT ANY MAJOR CHANGES IN PRC FOREIGN POLICY AS THE RESULT OF HUA'S APPOINTMENT. THEY WERE SURPRISED TO FIND THAT HUA HAD MET WITH SOME FORTY DIFFERENT

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DELEGATIONS IN THE PAST WHICH GIVE HIM MORE FOREIGN AFFAIRS EXPERIENCE THAN IS GENERALLY ASSUMED. ON IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES, KOLESNIKOV POINTED TO THE UPCOMING NIXON VISIT TO THE PRC AS AN INDICATION THAT SINO-U.S. RELATIONS WOULD NOT CHANGE.

5. COMMENT: AT THIS POINT, WE WOULD NOT PUT TOO MUCH VALUE ON KOLESNIKOV'S STATEMENT OF THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF HUA'S APPOINT-

MENT OR SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS. SOVIET EMBASSY PERSONNEL IN
PEKING USUALLY TAKE AN OPTIMISTIC LINE ON THE POSSIBILITIES FOR AN
IMPROVEMENT IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS AOD KOLESNIKOV'S
STATEMENTS ARE OBVIOUSLY SPECULATIVE AT THIS POINT.
NEVERTHELESS. THE SOVIETS MAY BE GENUINELY RELIEVED
THA TENG, WHOM THEY REGARD AS ONE OF THE WORST CHINESE SOVIET
BAITERS, WAS NOT PROMOTED TO THE PREMIERSHIP.
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